WORLD CHRONICLE

UNITED NATIONS

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United Nations Secretary-General

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SYNOPSIS

UNITED NATIONS WRAP-UP 1992

Joe Sills, Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General, comments on a 16-minute video which illustrates the major events of 1992 as seen from a United Nations perspective. He also discusses potential challenges facing the World Organization in 1993.

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VOICE: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **WORLD CHRONICLE**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **WORLD CHRONICLE.**

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is a special edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE.**

No one would doubt that last year, 1992, was a year of enormous challenges to the United Nations in its mission to uphold peace and human values across the globe. Our guest today is a man with a unique perspective on 1992; he is Joe Sills, a national of the United States of America, and spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General. Before I talk to Mr. Sills, let's look at a 16-minute year-end summary of the 1992 events as seen from a United Nations perspective.

NARRATION:

An explosion of weapons of war, but here it's in the cause of peace. The United Nations began eliminating weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

But elsewhere, in the former Yugoslavia, fire power played its familiar deadly role again, and the UN was called in.

War was compounded with famine in Somalia, and the UN had the task of delivering food to the starving through the chaos of armed conflict.

Just some aspects of the UN's effort to uphold peace and human values across the world, an effort

conducted in the face of great challenges during 1992.

Sweeping changes in world politics led in 1992 to a big growth in UN membership. It increased to a total of 179 countries. At the same time, the UN became involved in more peacekeeping efforts than at any point in its history -- 12 operations employing over 50,000 troops across the globe.

It was a demanding time for a new head to be appointed to the world body -- Boutros Boutros-Ghali, an Egyptian diplomat, and the first UN Secretary-General to come from the continent of Africa. Soon after he was installed, a unique event took place -- leaders of States represented in the Security Council all came to UN Headquarters in New York for a summit.

BOUTROS-GHALI:
"Your presence here is a striking demonstration of our reliance on the United Nations. This expression of support is profoundly gratifying to the Secretary-General whom you have just elected."

NARRATION:
The leaders' review of the state of the world sharply highlighted the daunting tasks facing the UN. President Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation:

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YELTSIN (INTERPRETER):
"Difficult work lies ahead for us all, to consolidate the positive trends in the evolution of today's world, and to make them irreversible."

NARRATION:
King Hassan of Morocco:

HASSAN (INTERPRETER):
"Given the new conditions of the world scene, the international community is itself confronting new difficulties and new challenges at a time when it aspires to peace."

NARRATION:
Premiere Li Peng of the People's Republic of China:

LI PENG (INTERPRETER):
"The responsibility of the United Nations and its Security Council has become heavier, and the challenges facing them have grown more formidable."

NARRATION:
The summit requested Mr. Boutros-Ghali to prepare a plan for improving the Organization's capacity to establish and maintain peace throughout the world. This was produced in the form of "An Agenda for Peace", a bold study addressing future needs in preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peacekeeping, and peace-building.

Preventive diplomacy: The idea is to ease tensions before they become conflicts. The Security Council

recommended that Member nations provide a permanent force to act swiftly in containing outbreaks of fighting and enforcing peace. States could also provide timely intelligence about potential threats to enable the UN to intervene at an early point.

Peacekeeping: In the former Yugoslavia, a fighting build-up to a scale and bitterness not seen in Europe since 1945. The arrival of the UN was one more peacekeeping commitment in a long line dating back more than 40 years and now stretching over four continents. The UN involvement here began in Croatia. UN-protected areas were marked out, and demilitarized under the supervision of international troops.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, ceasefires were negotiated by the UN working with the European Community. But as these repeatedly broke down, the UN force had to be enlarged, and it struggled to keep Sarajevo airport open to protect the delivery of humanitarian supplies, to ensure the safety of released civilians, and to ease the plight of Europe's biggest flood of refugees since the Second World War.

Peace-making: This, too, with all its difficulties, was highlighted in the intractable Yugoslavia situation. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Cyrus Vance, and the European Community's Lord Owen worked constantly through the year with all the parties concerned to seek a political solution, encountering setbacks time and again.

Peace-building: In Cambodia, the UN carried through its responsibility for disarming and demobilizing the factions who'd agreed to end their fighting. It was the most ambitious UN peace programme yet, with over 14 nations providing 20,000 personnel to work on the military and the civilian aspects of the return to normality.

FRENCH OFFICER (TRANSLATION):
"We have two missions here in particular. The first is to maintain contact with the local authorities. We've seen the police force, the customs, the military force, and all the local district representatives. Our second mission is our very presence at our post."

NARRATION:
One vital assignment was to organise the homecoming of over 300,000 refugees from neighbouring countries.

The mission encountered obstacles of non-cooperation from one faction -- the PDK, or Khmer Rouge. But the UN pressed ahead with the agreed plan to mount free elections in May of 1993.

After 16 years of civil war, elections finally came to Angola under UN supervision. International observers declared the process generally free and fair. But a violent dispute broke out after one round of voting. Intense diplomatic efforts had to be made to prevent a return to all-out war.

In South Africa, the UN's long-standing opposition to apartheid moved on to direct involvement inside the country. A UN team was called in to help monitor peace in the streets, while negotiations between the Government and its opponents went on, halted, and were prepared again -- talks aimed at a new, non-racial constitution.

And in Central America, where the Secretary-General was working with regional leaders, a peace process for El Salvador was advanced by UN representatives. They monitored the separation of armed factions and the protection of human rights, especially with political prisoners.

A whole new kind of post-war operation gathered pace in Iraq, where a Special Commission, set up by the Security Council along with the International Atomic Energy Agency, advanced from searching for weapons of mass destruction to physically disposing of them.

Also in Iraq, humanitarian work continued for the Kurdish population in the north and for the mostly Shiite population in the south. So did supervision of the demilitarized zone between Iraq and Kuwait, and the demarcation of the border between the two countries.

More reshaping: To improve the UN's ability to meet the growing challenges to peace, the Secretary-General launched far-reaching reforms in the Organization itself. The Secretariat was restructured, and still more streamlining is in

process. The reorganization took place in financial conditions which had become tighter than any the UN had known. And meanwhile, the demands on the Organization went on mounting. For besides the UN's peacekeeping activities, the international community calls more and more for initiatives over an ever-widening range of issues.

Like the threat to our environment: The relationship between environmental protection and economic progress has often been an uneasy one. Rio de Janeiro was the site in 1992 for the largest inter-governmental gathering ever to focus on ecological and development issues. The UN Conference on Environment and Development, known familiarly as the Earth Summit, addressed the need to preserve our global heritage while promoting the concept of sustainable development. Bringing the two concerns together at Rio was critical to the Secretary-General's aim of securing world peace.

BOUTROS-GHALI:
"I am particularly pleased to see that the Rio Summit renewed the call for eradication of poverty, because I'm convinced that poverty and peace cannot coexist."

NARRATION:
At the Summit, agreements were signed to protect the world's forests and biological diversity and to curb industrial emissions that contribute to global warming. Principles were also laid down by which the world's ecosystem could be cleaned up as we

enter the 21st century, and ecologically sound development could be set in place.

There could be many more programmes, like this collaboration by India and Denmark to harness the inexhaustible supply of wind to generate electricity.

In India, too, children who previously made a precarious living off rubbish dumps now help to run a systematic collection scheme for recyclable wastes. The world's children have an evident desire to grow up in healthier and safer surroundings, a desire expressed forcibly by young people at Rio.

YOUNG GIRL:
"I am only a child, yet I know if all the money spent on war was spent on finding environmental answers, ending poverty, what a wonderful place this earth would be."

NARRATION:
Shifting away from war: Getting resources redirected from warlike to peaceful purposes remained a UN commitment in 1992. In the former Soviet bloc countries, UN agencies helped in converting military industries to civilian kinds of production. This Russian aerospace factory was changing over to the manufacture of life-saving technology, like devices to monitor the human heart.

The human cost of warfare and hunger: In Somalia, civil war combined with famine to produce a fearful

disaster. Millions of Somalis face death from starvation. With rival warlords locked in combat, peacemakers found it well nigh impossible to negotiate ways of bringing in relief. Toward the end of the year, as international concern mounted, the Security Council took a dramatic decision: it accepted the United States offer to lead a military task force to ensure the delivery of humanitarian relief and then make way for a peacekeeping presence once security was assured.

BOUTROS-GHALI:
"I believe it was an historical resolution, it was a very important resolution: it will reinforce the United Nations, it will reinforce the new role of the United Nations, and will help the Somali people."

NARRATION:
In Mozambique too, UN agencies worked to redress the effects of war and hunger together. Two decades of conflict had left a legacy of widespread destruction and a massive refugee problem. All this was compounded by the raging drought that depleted food supplies throughout southern Africa.

And what of the longer view, not just the immediate emergencies created by war or famine? People's fundamental long-term needs were addressed in '92, as always, by the UN and its agencies. In the developing world especially, work continued to provide material and technical assistance for

building up economies and strengthening social systems.

And strength is needed. Death from AIDS made orphans of 20,000 Ugandan children in 1992, some of the 10 million African children expected to lose at least one parent to the disease by the end of this decade. With UN agency aid to their local communities, they were being helped to rebuild their shattered lives, being trained for jobs, and being educated to avoid AIDS themselves.

UGANDAN NURSE:
"We have to protect this young generation. Unless we do that, then our country will perish."

NARRATION:
In Senegal, A town crier summoned mothers to a clinic for their children -- part of a new, more community-based and affordable system of health care which is gaining ground across the continent with the encouragement of UN agencies.

In Costa Rica, even in a remote region, women were able to bring literacy teaching to other women and their families, part of a programme helped by the UN to develop women's self-reliance.

The needs of the most marginalized held the UN's attention in 1992. Indigenous people, all too often displaced from their traditional ways of living, were winning new rights, as in Colombia, where they

were given back their forest homeland with the support of UN workers.

COLOMBIAN INDIAN:
"We don't want the colonizers to take the land away from us. Now we will be the permanent owner of these lands, until the very last one of us exists."

NARRATION:
1993 will be the UN International Year for Indigenous People. Neglected and vulnerable, they comprise 300 million people scattered throughout more than 70 countries.

Through the new Secretary-General's first year in office, the UN held to the aims he first spelt out to the General Assembly.

BOUTROS-GHALI:
"The vision of the Charter of the United Nations is as valid today, after the end of the cold war, as it was in 1945, before the beginning of the cold war. I call for the cooperation and assistance of all who can help to transform the noble objectives of the Charter into reality."

NARRATION:
The reality in 1992 was that of progress made in spite of great difficulties. Even where the odds have seemed heavily set against a better future, as in war-torn Cambodia, the prospects for a happier life have been made brighter. With the reunion of

long separated families, the suffering of war is being replaced with tears of joy and peace.

LITTLEJOHNS: The programme is a special edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE.** Our guest is Joe Sills, Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General. Mr. Sills, welcome to **WORLD CHRONICLE.**

SILLS: Thank you, Michael.

LITTLEJOHNS: The conclusion of that video we've just seen, Joe, was fairly upbeat, but, in fact, conflict and human suffering are still rampant in many parts of the world. Analysing the year from your special position, would you say that it's been on the whole a good year for the United Nations, or do you feel that there are things that were left undone that could have been done, and that perhaps the Secretary-General might have wished to see a lot more progress made than in fact was made?

SILLS: Well, that's a big question. I think it's been a very challenging year for the United Nations, as was pointed out in the programme that we've just seen. A new Secretary-General came in with a new perspective on the Organization and on the challenges facing the United Nations. And perhaps something he said puts it in perspective. He said a few weeks ago that the United Nations in past years has suffered from a crisis of credibility -- too little credibility -- and now perhaps we suffer from a crisis of too much credibility, and that is that a great many people are asking us to do a great many things. So from that standpoint, yes, I think it was a very successful year for the United Nations, because in not only the field of peacekeeping and peace-making and peace-building, but also in the very important conference in Rio, the Earth Summit -- which I think set a new direction for looking at environmental and development issues together at the summit level meeting of the

Security Council -- there is more and more turning to the United Nations to do more and more things.

I think the problem we face is our organizational capability to do all of these things, in terms of people, in terms of financial resources, in terms on occasion of political will among the Member States, because the UN is finally made up of the Member States, and we're able to do what those Member States want us to do. So I think I would rather say than a good year or a bad year that it's been a very challenging year for the UN, and I think it's too soon to say how well the Organization and its Members will respond to those challenges.

LITTLEJOHNS: You mentioned the financial situation. The latest report I saw gives the number of something like $1.2 billion outstanding in contributions from Member States.

SILLS: That's correct, yes.

LITTLEJOHNS: Is this creating a real crisis for the Organization?

SILLS: It's creating a very real crisis for the Organization. That figure you give is a combination of debt on the assessed contributions, the regular budget, and then debt on peacekeeping operations. And it becomes more and more difficult to mount these peacekeeping operations, to get countries to supply the troops for them -- and they're supposed to be reimbursed for these costs -- if in fact they're not being reimbursed. It's putting tremendous strain on peacekeeping. The other side, which is the assessed contributions, is what enables the Organization to pay its bills. And we've been able to keep going, but this a tremendous arrearage, and as it gets cleared away I think we'll be able to do more things. So yes, indeed, this is a big handicap for us.

LITTLEJOHNS: Now, the Secretary-General, in "An Agenda for Peace", his report in response to the request from the summit meeting of the Security Council, has proposed the creation of a permanent peacekeeping force.

SILLS: Right.

LITTLEJOHNS: Is that idea flying, is it getting anywhere?

SILLS: Well, let's say that it's taxiing down the runway at this point. I don't think it's fair to say that it's flying, but it's gotten some very, very serious consideration, and it's being discussed by both the Assembly and the Security Council, and it's had support from a number of Member States. Now, bear in mind that what he proposes is a very small permanent force, and backing that up would be a much larger number of troops and a logistical capability to be assigned as the need occurs. But yes, I think it's very much alive and very much under discussion.

LITTLEJOHNS: Would you say the Secretary-General is satisfied with the response that he has received so far from the membership to his ideas?

SILLS: No, I would not say that. I think that the response has been a good one. I don't think he's dissatisfied, I don't think he's satisfied, I think he's waiting for even more responses, and for even more expressions of support on behalf of Member States. We've made good progress, there's been good support so far, but we still have a way to go.

LITTLEJOHNS: Interestingly enough, when the situation in Somalia became so severe that it was decided by the Security Council that action other than humanitarian aid, that had happened before, was

called for, it was left to the United States to carry the ball, so to speak, and in fact, the Secretary-General remarked that the United States was able the do within a few days what might have taken the United Nations several weeks or even months to achieve. Do you foresee that this is going to be more and more the pattern, that individual States, rather than the Organization itself, will do these things?

SILLS: Well, let's for a minute just go back to your initial statement. That's absolutely true, and I think it's important to point out that it was the Secretary-General who called the attention of the Security Council to the fact that what we were doing simply wasn't working, and that there was a situation in Somalia that the current efforts were not dealing with successfully. At that point, the United States, which does have a much greater capability than any other Member State for this type of very rapid action, indicated their willingness to do this.

I think that there is the possibility that the situation would arise again, but I would hope there won't be any more Somalias. I would hope that we would be more responsive in advance and do a better job of anticipating what has happened and not have to deal with that kind of emergency.

LITTLEJOHNS: And in the meantime, cooperation between the United States and the other coalition forces in Somalia and the United Nations is good?

SILLS: It's absolutely fine. We're very happy with that. We don't pretend that we agree on everything, but the discussion of what should be done in Somalia and how we should move from the current phase to a phase in which the United Nations is carrying out

the entire operation is going on right now, and it's a very cordial and a very constructive dialogue at this point.

LITTLEJOHNS: The Secretary-General has also said that the Organization is tending to be over-stretched, particularly in peace-keeping operations. You've got 13 peacekeeping operations in four continents, and four have been added this year by the Security Council. Is he getting a bit concerned about the demands that are being put on the Organization?

SILLS: He is, and that's very clear. It's come out in the statements that he's made in his annual report. We now have operations in Macedonia and in Mozambique, which have just been approved by the Council; and as I mentioned earlier, both in human terms and staff capabilities, in financial terms, and in willingness of Member States to support these operations, of course we're concerned. But they're all things that the Member States feel need doing. The Secretary-General and the United Nations' job is to respond to these needs, and if we get the support we need, and the political will is there, and the commitment, then we will respond to them.

LITTLEJOHNS: We've looked at 1992 in some detail. What about 1993? Where do we go from here? What are the main problems the United Nations is going to have to grapple with?

SILLS: I think to start with it'll be more of the same, because we have a lot of unresolved situations. Secondly, we're looking at some serious potential problems coming up in the area that was the former Soviet Union. I think we will have a great emphasis in '93 on human rights. The film mentioned the Year of the Indigenous People, and we have a major conference on human rights coming up in Vienna in June of '93. I think that there will be more

and more attention given at the United Nations to questions of development.

LITTLEJOHNS: Economic development.

SILLS: Economic development. The General Assembly just discussed the concept and called on the Secretary-General to do an agenda for development, which would parallel his "Agenda for Peace". So I think you will see more attention in that area. But we will continue to focus on these many peacekeeping and peace-making and peace-building enterprises which are not yet resolved.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Sills, that's all the time we have. Thank you for joining us on this special edition of World Chronicle, and if I may say so, for being such an interesting and articulate guest.

SILLS: Thank you.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

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Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: **WORLD CHRONICLE**, United Nations, Room S-827, New York, NY 10017, USA.

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